



National Center for Healthy Housing

**Statement on the Livable Communities Act of 2010 – H.R. 4690
House Financial Services Committee Hearing
September 23, 2010**

The National Center for Healthy Housing supports the Livable Communities Act. As championed by Representative Ed Perlmutter and 36 co-sponsors (and counting), this legislation envisions a nation-wide plan to promote livable communities through sustainable infrastructure for transportation, housing, land use, and economic development. The act establishes an Office of Sustainable Housing and Communities (OSHC) as well as an independent Interagency Council on Sustainable Communities in the executive branch to administer and oversee grants that support building and development projects at the local, regional and nation levels.

The Act's provisions will ensure that people across the US enjoy the benefits of well-designed, highly coordinated strategies for location-efficient, energy-efficient communities. Inherently, living in sustainable communities benefits people's health on many levels. Healthy housing strategies also can contribute significantly to sustainability and energy efficiency as well as long-term housing affordability.

We believe that good ideas in other House bills could complement the provisions already in the Act. We would encourage the Committee to seriously consider H.R. 3891, the Safe and Healthy Housing Act of 2009, and H.R. 3793, the Healthy Housing Council Act of 2009, to fortify the strategies in the Livable Communities Act during the upcoming deliberations. Both of these bills are supported by the National Safe and Healthy Housing Coalition. They provide for an interagency council to recommend actions to eradicate housing-related health hazards; study of how sustainable building features, such as energy efficiency, in housing affect the indoor environment and occupant health; health hazard reduction grants to leverage categorical grant programs to ensure that energy efficient homes are healthy and that healthy homes are energy efficient; the development of minimal health-based standards for cost-effective housing interventions; community capacity-building to bring the standards into homes; outreach to build awareness of the benefits of a healthy home, such as a seal of approval.

In addition, we urge the Committee to consider again building code grants for enactment and enforcement of building codes from the Community Building Code Administration Grant Act of 2009, H.R. 2246. This competitive grant program to provide grants to states, localities, and tribal authorities to fund code updates and enforcement is supported by the National Safe and Healthy Housing Coalition and the International Code Council.

Attached for the record is our press release regarding similar Senate Banking Committee action in weaving healthy housing into the Livable Communities Act last month.

We are available to support the Committee in its deliberations, and thank the Committee for considering the Livable Communities Act.

Building a Healthy Home Environment for All Children

Livable Communities Act of 2010 Marks First Bill to Include Healthy Housing Provisions

8/5/2010

Livable Communities Act of 2010 Marks First Bill to Include Healthy Housing Provisions

Columbia, MD (August 5, 2010) “The Livable Communities Act of 2010 passed another major legislative milestone this week when it was reported out of the Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee. It is the first major legislation to include healthy housing provisions, representing an unprecedented commitment from Capitol Hill to work for healthier housing for all Americans.

The Livable Communities Act of 2010, championed by Committee Chairman Chris Dodd (D-CT), proposes a nation-wide plan to promote livable communities through sustainable infrastructure for transportation, housing, land use and economic development. The act establishes an Office of Sustainable Housing and Communities (OSHC) as well as an independent, Interagency Council on Sustainable Communities in the executive branch to administer and oversee grants that support building and development projects at the local, regional and nation levels.

The National Center for Healthy Housing applauds Senator Dodd for working closely with long-time healthy housing advocate, Senator Jack Reed (D-R.I.) to incorporate healthy homes language and provisions into the bill.

I am pleased the Banking Committee approved this bill. This is an important step toward making healthy homes a reality for more families across the country. Residents of poorly designed, constructed or maintained housing are at greater risk for serious illnesses and injuries, including cancer, asthma and childhood lead poisoning, and this bill targets housing related health hazards in order to reduce these health risks, said Senator Jack Reed (D-R.I.).

The Livable Communities Act of 2010 reflects a much needed commitment to improve substandard housing for all families. With nearly 6 million U.S. households living in homes with plumbing problems, electrical hazards, water leaks and pest infestations, the legislation provides resources to help families attain healthier living environments, said Rebecca Morley, executive director of the National Center for Healthy Housing.

The healthy housing provisions of the Livable Communities Act of 2010 moves federal policy and funding to meet the needs that we are seeing at the local level, said Ronald Kraatz, LAMPP project director at Connecticut Children’s Medical Center.

Healthy Housing provisions in the Livable Communities Act of 2010 include:

- Creation of an Office of Sustainable Housing and Communities within the Department of Housing and Urban Development to coordinate policies and initiatives that foster livable communities which provide long-term affordable, accessible, energy efficient, healthy, location-efficiency housing choices.
- A new Interagency Council on Sustainable Communities with responsibilities that include supporting healthy housing, recommending legislation or other actions to eradicate housing-related health hazards, and conducting a detailed study of how sustainable building features, such as energy efficiency, in housing affect the quality of the indoor environment, the prevalence of housing-related health hazards, and the health of occupants.
- A new Community Zoning and Land Use Planning Grant and Building Code Enforcement Grant Program. The competitive grant program will provide grants to states, localities, and tribal authorities to fund code updates and enforcement. This provision largely incorporates the Community Building Code Administration Grant Act of 2009, key healthy housing legislation supported by the National Safe and Healthy Housing Coalition and the International Code Council.
- Two new grant programs that will advance healthy homes at the local level, including a Comprehensive Planning Grant Program totaling \$475 million and a Sustainability Challenge Grant Program totaling \$2.2 billion over four years.

Building a Healthy Home Environment for All Children